

Take Charge!



Providing information and ideas for City employees and their families on how to improve health and wellness

APRIL 2009

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3 BEST STEPS to Cancer Prevention

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

If you could do only 3 things to prevent cancer, what should they be? To find out, the American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR) assembled 9 teams of scientists and 21 top experts to analyze 7,000 studies in a 5-year project.

From AICR's landmark report, here are the top 3 recommendations for preventing cancer.



These 3 steps could prevent one-third of cancers worldwide.

STEP 1

Strive for a healthy weight throughout life. Strong evidence links excess body fat to some cancers. The risk for cancer of the colon, kidney, pancreas, esophagus, uterus, and breast increases with even small amounts of excess body fat, especially fat at the waist.

Scientists have found that abdominal fat increases levels of insulin, a hormone known to promote cancer. Excess fat may also produce higher levels of growth factors that stimulate cancer cells to grow and divide.

MORE INFO ▶

American Institute of Cancer Research: www.aicr.org

STEP 2

Choose mostly plant foods; limit red and processed meats. A plant-based diet contains many compounds your body can use to prevent or repair cell damage. Whole foods are a much better source of protective nutrients than are supplements. Eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans.

The AICR report calls for limiting sugary beverages, processed foods high in sugar or fat, salty foods, and red or processed meats. If alcohol is consumed at all, the recommended limit is two drinks a day for men, or one for women.

STEP 3

Get extra physical activity for 30 minutes or more every day. Staying active helps reduce cancer risk by lowering hormone levels. Plus, regular exercise helps you avoid gaining excess weight (See Step 1).

CITY Wellness Events

Start! Walking Day – April 8

Join Mayor Nickels at City Hall lower level plaza at 12 noon for a Start! Walking Day rally. Wear your sneakers to work and walk to Pike Place Market – 20 minutes.

Make your pledge to live a longer, healthier life by adding more steps each day.

Stress Management Strategies in Times of Change

April 4 and April 14

12 noon – 1:00 PM

Seattle Municipal Tower

Room 4050/4060

EAP Presentation

Bike to Work Month – May

Registration for Bike to Work Month starts May 6. Employees are encouraged to form teams and log onto the Cascade Bicycle Club site to keep track of mileage in May: <http://www.cbcef.org/>.

Featured City Benefit

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death. Cigarette smoking is directly responsible for nearly 30% of all cancer deaths.

If you're ready to think about quitting, call Free and Clear at 1-866-784-8454. This free quit smoking program is available to all City employees and dependents age 18 and over with benefits.

APRIL GOAL:

Best exercise for overall fitness is aerobic nonstop activity. Start with 10-minute machine workouts 3-4 days a week; increase time and intensity by 10% a week.

Normal Weight Obesity: Beyond BMI

Identifying *normal weight obesity* is a new tool in the battle against America's bulging waistline – Mayo Clinic researchers use the term to describe people with a normal Body Mass Index (BMI) who have a high amount of body fat. If that seems odd, the researchers point out that obesity is generally defined as excess fat, not excess weight.

A recent Mayo study involved measuring the body composition (fat to muscle ratio) of 2,127 men and women; more than half of them had normal weight obesity. Normal weight obesity participants with the highest body fat percentages were at greater risk for metabolic problems, including hypertension, high triglycerides, abnormal cholesterol and insulin resistance – all factors in heart disease.

The research, published last year, challenges the notion that a normal BMI (18.5-24.9) always protects against developing metabolic conditions, type 2 diabetes and heart ailments. But determining a person's body fat percentage or measuring the waist to determine abdominal fat (a risk factor for type 2 diabetes and heart trouble) may better predict heart disease risk than the traditional BMI. BMI measures weight only in relation to height, and cannot determine the ratio of fat to muscle or location of fat in the body.

Unsporting Behavior

Are you at risk for a sports injury?

With warm weather approaching, get ready to leap into motion – but easy does it! Sports injuries peak each spring when people start doing too much too soon.

Many of these injuries are avoidable. So you can continue to enjoy outdoor pursuits in the months ahead, exercise these precautions when starting a new sport or activity.

Adapt to new moves gradually. Increase the time and intensity of your physical activities no more than 10% per week.

Always warm up. Ease into your sport or exercise session with activities that raise your body temperature a bit to allow your muscles and heart to adapt to the added demand. Example: Try a short walk or jog followed by sport-specific stretches.

Cool down. At the end of your activity, gradually slow your intensity to allow your body to ease back to a normal pace.

Add strength-building exercises twice a week to help prevent strain and injuries.

Suit up. Invest in appropriate protective gear – for example, helmets for biking, or elbow, wrist and knee pads for skating – and of course proper footwear.



Take some lessons or get advice from a trainer or instructor to learn the proper techniques for your sport. It's sure to enhance your enjoyment and may keep you from getting hurt.

4-Point Plan to Prevent Pain, Strain or Injury:

- 1 Consult your provider before significantly boosting your activity level.
- 2 Take a break if a movement is painful or just doesn't feel right.
- 3 Seek medical care for these signs – severe pain or swelling; numbness; skin discoloration; loss of function; or inability to bear weight after 24 hours of self care.
- 4 For virtually all of your exercise-related pain the best first aid is to rest and to apply ice as soon as possible.

MORE INFO ► American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons: www.aaos.org

Online Medical Advice: Use with care.

More Americans than ever are surfing the Web for health information. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 80% of Web users in the U.S. search for health information online.

Health websites are available 24/7 and are usually free, making them an appealing and convenient resource. Fortunately, many receive medical review – just take the information with a dose of caution and these steps:

Choose sites that maintain current content and are regularly evaluated for accuracy by certified medical experts. *Tip:* The Medical Library Association lists reviewed, reliable sites in "For Health Consumers" (www.mlanet.org/resources/consumr_index.html). Check out their top 10 sites.

Review online advice with your health care provider before you try it. Studies have shown that people who seek advice online are less likely to



consult their provider. Trouble is, everyone experiences medical conditions differently; this makes your provider the best judge of treatment based on your personal medical history.

Bottom line: Responsible websites that provide reliable information will advise you not to use their content as a substitute for your provider's advice. Look for a disclaimer and a list of experts who review their information. One thing no website can ever replace is your provider's care.

How Well Do You Control Stress? *Or does stress control you?*

Today's uncertain global economy and other challenges create a heavy burden shared by many people, and the stress and negativity can be contagious.

Without coping skills, chronic stress leaves us vulnerable to mental and physical health problems. **Check the list – how well do you manage stress?**

- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** Do I know how to calm down when I feel upset?
- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** Am I able to avoid staying angry or negative?
- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** Am I able to avoid feeling moody or distracted?
- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** Am I able to recognize what upsets others?
- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** Can I turn to others at work to help me calm down and feel better?
- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** Do I usually feel relaxed and alert when I come home from work?
- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** Can I easily turn to family or friends for a calming influence?
- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** Do I know how to boost my energy when it's low?

If you can answer YES to most of these questions, you're probably doing well to control stress. If you mostly answer NO to these questions, the first step is to recognize that you may have reached a point where stress is now controlling your life.

The most telling sign of stress overload is **your health – how many of these symptoms do you have?**

Mental

- ☐ Poor memory and concentration
- ☐ Constant worrying
- ☐ Lack of interest in normal pleasures
- ☐ Feeling overwhelmed or overworked
- ☐ Feeling isolated

Physical

- ☐ Using alcohol or drugs to relax
- ☐ Eating more or less
- ☐ Sleeping more or less
- ☐ Nervous habits (nail biting, pacing)
- ☐ Frequent headache, stomachaches or colds

Let the exercise above be your first step to feeling less stress.

Life is full of stressful events. However, it is your reaction to situations that can cause stress – so for many people stress is feeling a loss of control.

Work to control what you can. For example, you can't control economic fluctuations but you can reduce the financial impact on you by wisely planning and using your resources.

Learn what you don't know. To solve a problem, you need to understand what's causing it. Get all the facts.

Avoid worrying, which usually creates stress and hinders your ability to cope. Sometimes you can only be patient and believe things will get better.

AVOID AGGRESSIVE DRIVERS



Dangerous driving habits are a serious threat on the nation's roads – raging tempers, tailgating, racing, weaving, flashing headlights, honking horns. According to AAA, aggressive driving can double your chances of getting into a collision, leading to injuries and even death. What can you do?

Behave behind the wheel:

- Don't block or drive way below speed limits in passing lanes.
- Keep your distance from erratic drivers.
- Don't fill more than one parking space.
- Don't tailgate. It's a major cause of rear-end collisions.
- Avoid yelling out the window or stopping on the road to argue.
- Don't speed up when someone tries to merge into your lane.
- Always buckle up in case of a crash.

Back off from aggressive drivers:

- Give way to bullish drivers rather than fight for space. Why battle?
- Don't challenge them by speeding up.
- Avoid eye contact with the driver.
- Ignore gestures and don't gesture back.
- Report unsafe driving to authorities.
- If the aggressive driver is involved in a crash, stop safely nearby and act as a witness to the driver's behavior.

Keeping your cool on the road can be challenging. You can't control how other drivers act, but you can make your drive safer for everyone.

Q: Choosing sports shoes?

A: Whether you walk, run, bike, hike or play several sports, there's a shoe for you. The American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society recommends a sport-specific shoe for sports you play 3 or more times a week.

When shopping, choose a store that specializes in fitting sports shoes and a sales staff who can judge proper fit; they should confirm size and watch you walk in the shoes. Fashion and color are nice features, but your priorities are fit and function. Choose support, comfort and construction appropriate to your activities.

More guidelines:

- Get your feet measured. Sizes vary among brands.
- Get fitted late in the day when feet tend to be a little swollen.
- The shoe should fit your larger foot.
- Shoes should conform to the shape of your feet, with roomy toes.



Tip: You don't need to "break in" shoes. They should provide comfort and support from the moment you put them on.



Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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CITY Health and Wellness Savings

Fitness Center Discounts

City of Seattle employees have access to discounts at many fitness centers, both national chains such as Curves and Bally Total Fitness and independent local facilities. Visit www.globalfit.com/fitness for details, including rates. Go to <http://personnelweb/benefits/wellness/physical.aspx> for additional downtown Seattle fitness center discounts.

Alternative Care Provider Discounts

Aetna members may access savings on health care-related products and alternative care providers. Go to your account at www.aetnavigators.com. Click on Discount Programs under Related Shortcuts; select Natural Products and Services.

Group Health provides a 20% discount on non-covered care from alternative care providers in the network, such as naturopaths, massage therapists, acupuncturists, chiropractors, etc. Discounts also apply to a limited network of yoga, tai chi, and Pilates instructors and personal fitness trainers. Go to your account at www.myghc.org and select the Provider Directory.

Boost Your Family's Veggie Quota

Eating vegetables regularly is essential to good health and longevity. Vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and countless chemicals known to boost health. But how do you get enough to meet the quota for all that good? Here are lots of ways to get the recommended 3-5 servings a day.

1) Think of vegetables as more than a side dish at dinner. Add a variety and color of vegetables at every meal and snack.

- Have your kids help create kabobs for grilling. Cut bite-size pieces of vegetables and skewer with alternating shrimps or chunks of meat or chicken.
- Serve leftover veggies for the next day's breakfast or lunch.
- Layer thinly sliced vegetables on sandwiches. Good picks: cucumber, tomato, mushroom and avocado.
- Try vegetables with dip for an afternoon snack.

2) Combine extra vegetables with favorite dishes. A serving of vegetables is a half-cup fresh or cooked or 1 cup of leafy greens.

- Enjoy sautéed vegetables such as peppers, mushrooms, zucchini, asparagus, or onions in scrambled eggs or omelets.
- Enrich your spaghetti sauce by adding kidney beans and zucchini chunks.
- Make or order your pizza with extra veggies such as artichoke hearts, hot peppers and spinach; many pizza outlets stock extra veggies for this request.
- Cut meat volume in half and double the vegetables when making stews, soups and chili.



Invite your children to join you at the market to pick out the vegetables – use any you like for this recipe. Your kids can help wash and prep the vegetables. They will love eating a dish they helped prepare.

3) Make salads daily fare. Eating a large salad can easily give you 3-4 servings of vegetables.

- Start each lunch or dinner with a generous mixed salad – it helps fill you up to curb your appetite for the main course.
- Make salad an entrée by adding hearty leftovers such as cooked meats, beans or rotelli pasta.
- Add surprise ingredients such as nuts, sunflower seeds or dried cranberries.
- Sprinkle a little grated cheese on top.

Cool Tips

- Make easy, creamy pureed soups with (fresh or cooked) cauliflower, broccoli, sweet potato, or asparagus. Just add chicken broth and herbs.
- Healthiest balance: Fill half your plate with vegetables; use a quarter of the plate for a healthy starch and a quarter for lean meat or fish.
- Keep ready-to-eat fresh vegetables handy, including carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, sliced bell pepper and olives.
- Save time with market-prepared produce – bagged salad greens, spinach and chopped stir-fry vegetables.

Recipe of the Month

Vegetable Pasta Toss

A colorful vegetable dish designed to excite kids of all ages.

- 1 Start with 4 cups cooked **tri-color spiral pasta**.
- 2 Pick 2 to 3 cups of vegetables such as:
 - 1 cup **broccoli** florets
 - 1/2 cup **snow peas**
 - 1/2 cup **carrots**, julienned
 - 1/2 cup **red bell pepper**, sliced thin
 - 1/4 cup sliced **green onions**
 - 1/2 cup light **Italian dressing**
 - 2 tbsps fresh **lemon juice**
- 3 Place 1 inch of water in a small saucepan; add broccoli and peas. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 2-3 minutes. Rinse in cold water and drain.
- 4 In a large bowl, combine broccoli and peas with pasta, carrots, bell pepper and onions.
- 5 Pour dressing and lemon juice over salad and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Nutrition Facts

Makes 6 servings (about 1 cup each).

Amount Per Serving	Calories	206
	Protein	6.7g
	Fat	3.7g
	Saturated Fat	0g
	Cholesterol	0mg
	Carbohydrate	36g
	Fiber	3.1g
	Sodium	167mg

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